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1. Introduction

Since a very young age, my major interests and passions have related to education, social development and technology, as I find them compelling and innovative in everyday life. For these reasons, I have engaged in these areas, both in my university studies and professional career. Hence, after I finished my degree, I started a job as a language teacher, where I was able to develop a variety of skills, such as communication and team work. I also like to work in the development of communities, which is why I have worked as a volunteer in projects regarding the social rehabilitation of street children in Ecuador, and language support for refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom (UK). These aforementioned points of experience will be detailed in this self-evaluation paper. In addition, the MA (DTCE) had provided me with the necessary skills to become a critical and constructive individual that would allow me to continue my career in social and professional development through the appropriate implementation of educational technology.

2. Self-Evaluation as an Educator: Reward Systems, Digital Games, and Learning Websites

I moved to the UK in 2012 and secured a job as a language teaching assistant, supporting Year 3 Spanish children in social adjustment and language development. When I started, I was relatively new to teaching young children, as my previous experience had been with teenagers and adults. From the beginning, I was faced with serious problems of demotivation and feelings of exclusion from the Spanish children, as they were struggling to cope with the changes in friends, country, culture and language. This resulted in complete disinterest in their studies, with disengaged them from their education.

My job, therefore, was to motivate these students in order to instil fresh motivation them. I must admit that at the beginning I did not have any idea of how to improve their motivation or to help them to gain some interest in their education. I decided to create a reward system based on the acquisition of sweets, as they were not interested in the “achievement stars” that children normally obtain in schools. I also based my teaching on Laurillard’s conversational model. For example, when I taught them the times-tables, I always made sure that they understood why they were learning them by associating the importance of knowing the times-tables with real life examples. In addition, when they made mistakes, they had to reflect on why they were wrong

and how they could correct those mistakes. The reward at the end of each task was a sweet; so for each day, I had to bring a bag of sweets.

At the beginning I was mainly teaching in Spanish, but the idea was that they gradually adapt to conducting their everyday school life in English. So, after a degree of negotiation with the head teacher and children, I decided to introduce another “motivation factor”: the playroom. At the end of the week, if they had completed all the assigned learning tasks in English, then they could spend part of my lessons in the school’s playroom. As a result, after a few weeks of using this reward system, the students were back on track and were gaining an interest in their learning. Due to the success of this method, the teacher in charge decided to increase the amount of children that I needed to supervise; they were English children with learning difficulties. I need to highlight that this was not part of my job description, as I was hired just to be in charge of the Spanish children, but I decided to take it on as a learning experience. Hence, there were positives and negative aspects, as it meant that I could not give the same attention to the Spanish children, but at the same I could create a little learning community in order to support all of them simultaneously.

I decided to create working groups of two people, normally with one Spanish and one English child. This allowed the development of mutual support between the children, which advanced beneficial results in the learning progress (Duffy & Jonassen, 2013). I noticed that each child had a specific learning style. For example, some had a preference for reading rather than visual materials, and so it was necessary to have a variety of learning materials in order to keep them motivated (Fleming, 2001). At this point I was still using the reward system based on sweets and playtime to keep them motivated, which were not exactly the best rewards in the long term, so I decided to introduce another type of practice, where children at the end of each lesson had to reflect on what they had learnt and feel proud of their won achievements. Normally, I used the questions “what did you know before the lesson?” and “what do you know now?” The reward for them was the gaining of knowledge and feelings of self-achievement. I must admit that at the beginning it was difficult to remove the sweets and playtime reward system, but, in the end, I managed to keep the children motivated and eager to learn, as their performance in class and exams were outstanding (Duffy & Jonassen, 2013).

Similarly, in 2013, I started teaching Spanish GCSE to children in Years 10 and 11. It was there that I perceived that learning a language is not one of the major interests in young children in the UK; however, I could not blame them, as the way the foreign languages curriculum is structured

does not allow learners to gain an interest in language or to promote their linguistic capacities. Unfortunately, learning a language was perceived as some type of compulsory, boring and unnecessary subject for most of the students. Hence, at the beginning it was a bit difficult to identify what would be the best pedagogical approach for this type of learners.

After a few unsuccessful lessons I decided to reflect on my teaching practices (Schön, 1991). I realised that generally most of my students carried mobile phones, iPads and laptops, so I thought that the use of technology as a learning tool could be a useful resource. Thus, I formulated my prior TPACK (Technological, Pedagogical and Content Knowledge) in order to create interactive lessons that were relevant and attracted the attention of the students (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). This allowed me to identify digital games as one way of using technology in education; most digital games are created for entertainment purposes, but I adapted them to my teaching practices in order to reinforce my lessons and make them more attractive to the students. As a result, my students gained more interest in learning languages, as most of them enjoy the idea of “learning via play” (Prensky, 2001). In addition, I tried to make the lessons meaningful for the students by making all my teaching materials relevant and by stimulating discussion between all the students (Dewey, 2007). I also reinforced a reflection practice via the use of a diary, as all the students had to write their good and bad experiences during the week in the target language.

After observing the increase in positive attitudes of my students in relation to learning a foreign language with the use of technological tools, I decided to create a learning web page using WordPress. The original idea was to use it only to distribute my teaching materials to my students (Duffy & Jonassen, 2013). However, in order to boost the creativity of my students, I decided to use the website as a motivational tool through the creation of their own learning materials. Hence, every month we had a competition where the students (in groups of two) designed any type of learning material in relation to the target language, such as: games, quizzes, audio, readings, etc. They then presented them to their peers in order to choose the winner. The prize for the winner was to publish their created materials on the learning website. As a result, at the end of the academic year, the students were motivated and also felt more confident about their linguistic competence in the target language.

Final Assignment EDUC70140 Educational Technology and Communication Self-Evaluation Document (SED)

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Learn Spanish ¡Rápido!

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BEGINNERS A1-A2

In this section you can find different quizzes designed by me for all levels, which will help you to test your level or learning progress. Good Luck.

En esta sección encontrarás varios test para todos los niveles, elaborados por mí, los mismos que te ayudarán a examinar tu nivel o evaluar tu progreso de aprendizaje. ¡Buena suerte!

Principiantes / Beginners (Niveles A1-A2)

Test de Vocabulario

1. Vocab- Los números 0-100
2. Vocab- los números 100-1000
3. Vocab- las ciudades
4. Vocab- La familia- Vocabulario
5. Vocab- El Tiempo- Vocabulario
6. Vocab- ¿Qué hora es? - Vocabulario
7. Vocab- Lugares en el pueblo o ciudad / Vocabulario

Test de gramática / Grammar

1. Grama- Masculino o Femenino
2. Grama- Masculino o Femenino / Visual
3. Grama- Pronombres personales
4. Grama- Adjetivos posesivos cortos
5. Grama- Pronombres reflexivos
6. Grama- Pronombres de Objeto Directo
7. Grama- El tiempo Presente del verbo Ser / Present tense
8. Grama- El tiempo Presente del verbo Estar / Present tense
9. Grama- Tiempo presente Verbos Ser y Estar / Present tense
10. Grama- Presente-Indicativo-verbos regulares / Present tense
11. Grama- Modo-Indicativo-Preterito-verbos regulares / Past tense
12. Grama- Modo-Indicativo-Tiempo Futuro(1) / Future tense
13. Grama- (o-a- infinitive/ Tiempo-futuro(2) / Future tense

Test de comprensión auditiva (Listening skills)

1. Audio- Test de Audio- Los números 0-100
2. Audio- Masculino o Femenino
3. Audio- las vacaciones / The Holidays 1
4. Audio- las vacaciones / The Holidays 2
5. Audio- las vacaciones / The Holidays 3

Test de comprensión auditiva con videos (Listening skills)

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- *Spanish is the mother tongue of approximately 420 million people in the world and is the official language in 21 countries.
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Image 1 1 Learning website <https://jackyspanish.co.uk/>

In general, the two aforementioned educational contexts had various aspects in common. For instance, the initial demotivation of the learners were possible to overcome, first by the use of reward systems, and second by the use of technology in the form of digital games and a learning website. I can see that in both scenarios I tried to create collaborative learning environments where learners support each other (Duffy & Jonassen, 2013). Nevertheless, in the second context, I noticed that the use of digital games did not attract female learners in the same way as male learners; however, female learners were more inclined to writing personal diaries. Hence, it is vital to understand the variety of learning preferences when designing lessons (Fleming 2001). Even though I am satisfied with the results of the teaching methods I used for these specific contexts, I believe that I could have achieved better results if I had been more aware of not overloading my students with too much information (Miller, 1956).

3. Self-Evaluation as a Volunteer: Theatre and Communication Planning

In the summer of 2013, I enrolled myself as part of a social project to help poor and abandoned children who lived on the streets of Quito-Ecuador. This was undertaken by a non-governmental organization (NGO) that supports orphan and street children. I had the opportunity to teach them basic mathematics, computer skills, Spanish and any additional skill required. Moreover, in order to relieve psychological issues and learning disadvantages, I decided to create a learning game in the form of a weekly theatre where, in groups of four, they had to use the knowledge gained from the lessons during the week to create a little educational play about a specific topic they liked. They were allowed to use humour to some degree, and it had to be presented to their peers and the new street children that were arriving every week.

Looking back on this experience, I tried to apply the idea of communities of practice to some degree, as the theatre game that I had created allowed the children to exchange knowledge and skills within their little community (Wenger et al., 2002). It was interesting to note that, while performing this game, the children gained confidence and no longer felt excluded. Indeed, they were building their knowledge and skills with the help of their peers. Nevertheless, I believe this game could have been improved by introducing some type of reward system for the children, which could have allowed them to improve their perspectives regarding the benefits of education.

Furthermore, in 2016 I started voluntary work in a local refugee centre in Darwen-UK, in order to help refugees and asylum seekers to integrate and become productive members of British society, who came from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iran. This was an experience that allowed me to identify the value of understanding the differences in interpersonal communication according to religion, age, gender, etc. In this particular context I was able to use my teaching skills to help the refugees to learn English. At the beginning it was a difficult experience, as most of them were complete beginners, and in most cases there was a mix of adults and children. In addition, the classrooms were not exactly appropriate or adequate for teaching, and the funding for the lessons was limited. Hence, I decided to create a system to be able to communicate with them and advance their language skills. Thus, with the help of technology I learnt about their countries of origin and their native languages, which allowed me to create flashcards with the most useful English words on one side and the translation in their own language on the other. Additionally, I tried to take advantage of the existence of non-verbal communication by, for example, teaching verbs with actions and greetings with roleplays. All of

this helped them to move from level 0 to at least level 1, by allowing them to make more sense of the English language.

In general, I think that it was a good experience; however, I believe I could have done more for these learners by reinforcing the learning from the Most Knowledgeable Others (MKOs), as in this specific context the younger learners were the most capable to learn and move more quickly into the zone of proximal development (ZPD) with the help of the teachers (Bates, 2015). Thus, I believe that the adult learners could have benefited more by working together with their peer MKOs. I wished that I had placed everyone to work in groups and form learning communities in order to provide support for all members.

Overall, both of the aforementioned experiences provided me with the tools to be able to understand the needs of a specific context and the importance of adaptability. For instance, in these two scenarios, many of the learners presented psychosocial issues and learning disadvantages. As a result, it was vital to adapt to their learning needs and limitations. I believe in both contexts that I tried to use the Visual, Auditory, Reading and Kinaesthetic (VARK) Model as a reference to create teaching tools that were suitable for all type of learners (Fleming, 2001).

4. DTCE experience

The MA DTCE course has been designed to provide learners with a critical view of the role of technology within education and its effect upon society. As a result, in my first semester as part of my final assignment, I designed a literacy plan called “Information and Digital Literacy Skills for Teachers Working in New Modern Schools of Indigenous Ecuadorian Communities”, where the idea was to design four lessons plans in order to provide the teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to cope with the introduction of technology into their practices. I mainly designed the lessons plans based on providing the teachers with the skills necessary for effective use of the available technology, such as: online storage, online safety and internet searches. However, I failed to create a literacy plan that would have allowed the teachers to critically reflect on the growing need to adopt technology into their teaching practices (Schön, 1991). Therefore, I believe that if this plan is put into practice, I will take on board the concept that teachers in this context view technology as an “intruder” imposed by the government to replace the majority of teaching roles, resulting in the loss of their cognitive authority over students. Consequently, it will be necessary to design lessons that will allow learners to identify: why they have certain negative perceptions about technology; how the cognitive authorities of this context

are affecting their thoughts, beliefs and fears about technology; and how they can expand their information landscape with a critical attitude in order to cope with technological demands.

5. Conclusions

Through the present document I have presented a self-evaluation of some of my work experience in various contexts: professional, voluntary and academic. All of these experiences have provided me with the knowledge and skills to be able to work in an international environment where the enhancement of motivation and mutual collaboration is required. Additionally, my work in social development has enhanced my diligent and empathic nature that will ultimately be beneficial to any organisation.

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